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Testimony of William J. Clendenen

CT Bar Association, President-elect

**In Support of
Chief Justice Chase Rogers**

Judiciary Committee
April 10, 2015

Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Bill Clendenen. I am principal in the law firm of Clendenen & Shea in New Haven. Today I am before you as president-elect of the CT Bar Association which consists of more than 9,000 members. I am also here today to express our strong support for Chief Justice Chase Rogers on the CBA's behalf.

Eight years ago the Chief Justice was vetted by this committee and then both the Senate and the House of Representatives confirmed her as Governor Rell's nomination. Today Governor Malloy has that same confidence in what the Chief justice has done in the last eight years with confidence that she will continue to move the Judicial Branch forward in its mission. Eight years ago Justice Rogers accepted the monumental task of administering one of the three branches of CT's state government.

It has been her charge to ensure meaningful access to justice and the Rule of Law. Besides the Supreme Court, the Chief Justice has responsibility for the Appellate Court, the Probate Court and Superior Court with its Civil, Criminal, Family, and Juvenile divisions, along with special sessions for housing, land use, tax appeals, small claims, family violence, and child protection. Her responsibilities with over 4200 employees mean having the right people in the right places, including 1500 in adult and juvenile probation, plus the marshals, Superior Court Judges, Senior Judges, Judge Trial Referees and Family Support Magistrates.

In the time that Chief Justice Rogers was confirmed the economy took a quick and violent dip necessitating changes in the way the branch traditionally operated. The financial situation at the branch has always been challenging, but Chief Justice Rogers has always made it work even when concerned about court security, translators, and a wearisome computer system.

In her eight years, Chief Justice Rogers has received seventy-four new judges with the hope that they will be great judges like their colleagues loving their jobs and being fair to the people who come before them every day.

Our CBA members use the court system more frequently than most professionals in the state and during that time we have experienced so many positive changes in the past eight years.

The Chief Justice continues to work with CBA to assist self-represented parties, the economically disadvantaged, and those individuals with modest means to have meaningful access to the court system.

Also enhancing access to justice has been one major goal of the Chief Justice's administration (i.e. enhancing accommodations under the ADA; Language Line available in all clerks' offices, support enforcement offices and probation offices; publications in plain language; videos to help people navigate the court system; volunteer attorney program; Pro Bono Summits; etc.).

The Chief Justice understands how these accommodations can make all the difference in the world (i.e. allowing people to bring their cellphones into a courthouse; opening the doors of the courthouse earlier so that people are not waiting outside in the cold or rain; expecting civility from her staff – in fact, she set up a “secret shopper” type program to evaluate the level of service provided by staff to members of the public) to Connecticut's citizens.

The Chief Justice has made the court system more transparent (i.e. cameras are now in courthouses throughout the state; case information is displayed on the website).

Also by making the system more efficient (i.e. e-filing) it is better and less expensive for attorneys and our citizens.

The Branch, under her leadership, is working towards her goal of making available audio recording of proceedings at nominal cost, in a timely manner, and via the Judicial Branch website.

For all of these reasons the CT Bar Association -- without hesitation -- asks that this Committee favorably approve Chief Justice Rogers for another eight years.